UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

DYstr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/1998/6
18 May 1998

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Sub-Commission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities
Working Group on Indigenous Populations
Sixteenth session
27 July-31 July 1998

Report of the Workshop of Indigenous Journalists Madrid, 26-28 January 1998

Chairman-Rapporteur: Sebastián Lara

Introduction

1. The recommendation to organize a workshop of indigenous journalists was made by the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities in its resolution 1996/34 of 29 August 1996 entitled "International Decade of the World's Indigenous People". In that resolution the Sub-Commission recommended that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (formerly the Centre for Human Rights) organize a workshop, with the participation of appropriate departments of the United Nations and other relevant institutions and persons, in order to improve the dissemination of information about the United Nations and its activities related to indigenous peoples. In its resolution 1997/15 of 22 August 1997, the Sub-Commission made further reference to the proposed workshop and recommended that it be held in the early part of 1998, with the participation of governmental representatives, the Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, the International Press Institute, as well as indigenous journalists and competent United Nations agencies.

2. As part of the preparations for the proposed workshop, the Office of the High Commissioner sent questionnaires to indigenous organizations and journalists, as well as other interested institutions or persons, during the last quarter of 1996. The questionnaire, together with a series of informal discussions, sought to identify the major themes and priorities that might be addressed by the workshop. A number of common points emerged from the consultations. Firstly, there was general agreement that indigenous issues were not well covered in the mainstream press and that sometimes the pictures of indigenous peoples' cultures were distorted. Secondly, indigenous journalists stated that they often lacked the technical knowledge and the financial means to establish their own media. The workshop might therefore offer an opportunity to consider possible solutions to these problems. Thirdly, there was a suggestion that indigenous journalists had an important role to play as intermediaries between the United Nations and the communities. In particular, it was thought that indigenous journalists could provide information about relevant United Nations activities to indigenous communities. The proposed workshop was welcomed as it was thought that it would lead to greater interaction among the mainstream press, the United Nations system and the indigenous media and, in particular, could serve as a springboard for the establishment of an indigenous media network. Those consulted recommended that the workshop be of a technical nature with participation limited to about 30 practising journalists and other experts.

3. In the light of the foregoing, the Office of the High Commissioner prepared a project outline for the proposed workshop which was presented to the Advisory Group for the Voluntary Fund for the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People for its suggestions and comments when it met in April 1997. The Advisory Group decided to recommend that the workshop be supported by the Voluntary Fund with a contribution of $66,000. The officer-in-charge, and subsequently the High Commissioner, approved the workshop although some reduction was made in the budget in the light of the resources available in the Voluntary Fund.

4. It may be noted that there has been an interest in developing relations between the United Nations and indigenous media in order to make the increasing number of international activities better known to indigenous communities. As a result, indigenous journalists have been encouraged to attend sessions of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations and other meetings dealing with indigenous issues. In 1993, the Department of Public Information invited an indigenous journalist to cover the events of the World Conference on Human Rights. Furthermore, indigenous representatives are active in the promotion of the rights of the indigenous media and their concerns are reflected in article 17 of the draft United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples which reads as follows:

> "Indigenous peoples have the right to establish their own media in their own languages. They also have the right to equal access to all forms of non-indigenous media. States shall take effective measures to ensure that State-owned media duly reflect indigenous cultural diversity."

Participation and documentation

5. In accordance with the aforementioned resolutions, the Workshop of Indigenous Journalists was held in Madrid from 26 to 28 January 1998. The list of participants at the Workshop is contained in annex I to the present report.

6. The following documents were made available to the Workshop:

Provisional programme (HR/MADRID/SEM/1998);

"Getting indigenous issues covered in the mainstream press", paper by Suhas Chakma (HR/MADRID/SEM/1998/BP.1);

"The indigenous media as an intermediary between the United Nations and the community", paper by Atencio López (HR/MADRID/SEM/1998/BP.2);

Provisional list of participants (HR/MADRID/SEM/1998/INF.1);

Final list of participants (HR/MADRID/SEM/1998/INF.2).

Opening and general debate

7. The Workshop was opened by Mr. Julian Burger on behalf of the High Commissioner for Human Rights who expressed gratitude to the Government of Spain for hosting the meeting and to the Casa de América for the conference facilities. He provided some background information relating to the Workshop and in particular encouraged the participants to focus on practical suggestions and recommendations which could form the framework for a programme of activities to strengthen indigenous media during the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. On behalf of the Government of Spain, Mr. Tomás Rodríguez Pantoja, Director of the Casa de América, and Mrs. María Noguerol, representing the Government of Spain, welcomed the participants to Madrid and noted the importance of the indigenous media in promoting the cultures and rights of indigenous peoples. Participants invited Sebastián Lara to be the Chairman-Rapporteur of the Workshop. The programme as contained in annex II was adopted.

8. Participants welcomed the opportunity to discuss issues of concern to the indigenous media and thanked the United Nations for the invitation to take part in the discussions. There was general agreement that the mainstream media tended to write about indigenous peoples only when there was conflict or tragedy and that otherwise articles often focused on folkloric or stereotypical aspects. There was an observation that the media in some countries reflected the dominant groups and that this reality should be borne in mind when considering the difficulties of access faced by indigenous people. Some participants also mentioned the role of the press in homogenizing cultures to the detriment of the unique way of life of their peoples. There was also recognition of the shortcomings of indigenous journalism which often did not take into account the marketplace in which the mainstream press was working. It was hoped that the Workshop would identify some of the practical measures that could be taken to improve indigenous

journalistic skills and to sensitize the mainstream press to indigenous issues. There was a suggestion that more indigenous women should be encouraged to enter the profession of journalism.

Indigenous issues in the mainstream press

9. The item was introduced by Mr. Suhas Chakma. He explained that the press could not be seen as monolithic and, in his country, was vibrant and critical. He said that there was space for more articles about indigenous people but that journalists needed to know the rules. This meant that an indigenous journalist wanting to place a story with the mainstream press must be familiar with editorial policy, have good inside contacts, and be adept at finding a "hook" with which to link the proposed article. Good timing was essential. As far as United Nations matters were concerned, there were stories to be found in some of the periodic reports to the treaty bodies and research on those topics could produce more coverage. Indigenous journalists needed to be credible, competitive and ready to learn the necessary skills.

10. The need to know editors and mainstream journalists personally was a point taken up by several other speakers. There was also agreement that indigenous journalists needed to become more professional when they had not had the opportunity to be formally trained. Some participants spoke about the limitations of writing only for the alternative press since it had a limited readership. Indigenous journalists faced the challenge of finding a balance between providing information that was interesting to the larger public without being sensational.

11. Some of the participants stated that many of the present generation of indigenous journalists were self-taught. Indigenous people had started their own media because their issues were not covered properly in the wider press. It was important to recognize the motivation of indigenous journalism, not only the acquisition of technical skills.

12. Participants gave examples of the difficulties they faced when trying to get prominence for their television programmes or written articles in the press. There was a tendency for indigenous matters to be placed under "entertainment" or put at less popular times of the day or in the back pages of the newspaper.

13. Mr. Carlos Arnaldo, the representative of UNESCO felt that there were two types of training which might be desirable. The first was related to the development of knowledge and technical skills needed for working in the media; the second he called "advocacy training", which came more directly from indigenous peoples themselves and sought to get across a message through a press strategy. Other participants echoed these suggestions by stating that indigenous journalists needed to know about their own histories and cultures as well as about the mass media and the essential technical skills. It was suggested that indigenous journalists could also use the growing local press and media better.

Strengthening the indigenous media

14. Ms. Tupaarnaq Rosing Olsen, Ms. Henrietta Rasmussen, Ms. Tida Ravn and Ms. Liv Inger Somby made presentations on the development of the indigenous media in Greenland, Norway and the Arctic region generally. There was a long tradition of indigenous journalism in the Inuit language. One of the existing newspapers in the Inuit language had been established in 1860 and was published by the Inuit themselves. Radio programmes in Greenlandic had been broadcast since the 1940s and television with some indigenous content had existed since the 1970s. In 1982 a school of journalism was opened and a new generation of Inuit journalists had been trained. There was a flourishing press which included newspapers, radio and television. The speakers stressed the importance of developing radio and television. It was also recognized that the indigenous media in certain countries had substantial resources and skills and that journalists from those countries had a responsibility to think of other indigenous peoples with more difficulties, especially where they faced limitations on freedom of speech and of the press.

15. In presenting the different country situations, the speakers recommended that emphasis be put on the establishment of an international association or network of indigenous journalists. They also agreed on the need for training or further education but suggested that indigenous peoples' own journalism schools could be strengthened.

16. Most participants agreed that the two keys to strengthen the indigenous media were by improving training and strengthening the financial base of existing indigenous media. In that respect it was stated that indigenous journalists needed to maintain their independence and reliability in order to be credible both to the wider public and to their own people. As far as improved skills were concerned, some participants thought that indigenous journalists needed to avoid the trap of portraying their own societies in a folkloric way, as did mainstream journalists.

17. The participants drew attention to the objectives of the Workshop, which were pertinent to all media. Indigenous persons needed to learn skills in the media that included all aspects of the profession, from behind-the-camera expertise to editorial ability. Indigenous people also needed to work within State and private media as well as in their own independent media.

18. Mr. Arnaldo thought that indigenous journalists would benefit from networking and could make broad-based requests as an association. He also felt that an indigenous journalists network could be linked to non-indigenous trade unions. There were some journalism courses available on the Internet in which his organization was involved. Those courses could perhaps be expanded to include modules for indigenous journalists.

Indigenous journalists and the United Nations

19. The item was introduced by Mr. Atencio López, who drew attention to the international context of the Workshop. He spoke of the rapid development of indigenous peoples' own media as well as their growing interest in international affairs. The United Nations had also been expanding its work on indigenous questions and the speaker referred to a number of international

conferences such as the Earth Summit (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) and the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993) in which indigenous peoples had participated in large numbers. He said that he had been chosen by the Department of Public Information of the United Nations to report on the Vienna Conference. He suggested that greater efforts were needed to help indigenous journalists familiarize themselves with the activities of the United Nations and the specialized agencies.

20. It was noted that international developments increasingly impinged upon the daily lives of indigenous communities. The decisions taken by the United Nations were more and more relevant for indigenous people and both the Organization and indigenous journalists had responsibilities to ensure that information was transmitted to local communities. It was recognized, however, that much of what the United Nations did was not "news", nor was it easily accessible or readable. Some participants pointed out that the United Nations produced comprehensive documents which were relevant to indigenous peoples, but they were often not used by indigenous journalists. Mr. Christian Ramos Veloz described some of the documentation which was available for the ILO Committee of Experts meetings. Although a unique source of information, it was not used often by indigenous people or by journalists.

21. It was acknowledged that indigenous journalists needed to devote some of their efforts to learning about the United Nations but that the United Nations needed to make its own work more generally available. Most participants agreed that not enough information about intergovernmental decisions was reaching the communities and journalists needed to learn to read between the lines of reports. It was thought that indigenous journalists should attend more intergovernmental meetings.

22. Participants set aside some of the meeting time to discuss the potential benefits of the Internet for indigenous journalists. Some believed that the Internet offered many opportunities for networking and exchange of documentation and suggested creating a webpage for indigenous peoples, a virtual museum of indigenous arts and a thesaurus of indigenous concepts. Others noted that the creation of a webpage was cheap and relatively easy to do; it had the advantage of eliminating borders between indigenous peoples. However, certain speakers cautioned against too great a reliance on the Internet since it was still not available to the majority of indigenous peoples. Mr. Arnaldo spoke about cheap technology for local radio stations and referred to the possibility of using the Internet to download radio programmes from digital files.

23. In concluding the Workshop, participants expressed interest in continuing the dialogue among indigenous journalists and requested the Office of the High Commissioner to arrange further consultations on the theme.

Recommendations

24. At its concluding meeting the Workshop agreed to adopt the following recommendations containing an outline for a programme to strengthen the indigenous media during the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People and requested that the report of the Workshop be submitted to the sixteenth session of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations.

A. Training and education

25. Training and educational activities should be developed to enable indigenous media workers to improve their professional and technical skills in the communication media, and strategies elaborated for advocacy communication through training workshops, scholarships, internships and other initiatives. Where feasible and appropriate, use should be made of electronic journalism courses on the Internet (such as those designed by the European Journalism Centre, Maastricht); modules for indigenous journalism should be designed within these courses.

26. Training and educational activities should be developed for indigenous media workers within indigenous media organizations through exchange of indigenous journalists and other exchange programmes so as to create specific sensitivities to indigenous journalism.

27. Training and educational activities should be strengthened for indigenous media workers to gain knowledge and experience of the United Nations and the specialized agencies through seminars and other programmes; indigenous journalists should be invited to relevant meetings.

B. Networks

28. As the basis of eventual regional or global networks and associations, the formation should be encouraged of local or national associations, unions or clubs of media practitioners that can ally with regional or global associations. As far as possible such associations should relate closely to other professional journalist organizations and networks.

29. A preliminary database of indigenous media workers should be established in cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNESCO and indigenous organizations with a view to founding an international indigenous media workers network to develop activities aimed at further strengthening the indigenous media.

30. A preliminary database of non-indigenous journalists should be established in order to stimulate better coverage of indigenous issues in the mainstream press.

31. The United Nations and the specialized agencies should be requested to explore ways in which indigenous journalists can be better informed about their activities affecting indigenous peoples through information packages, direct links through electronic mail and other mechanisms.

C. New technology and special projects

32. The United Nations, in particular OHCHR, DPI, UNDP, ILO, UNESCO and other relevant specialized agencies should be requested to develop further national and regional projects to provide training and assist indigenous organizations to establish and upgrade their media.

33. The possibility should be explored with Internet servers of establishing an international indigenous webpage for information alerts, news and features and other relevant information for indigenous people and generally, including support for an indigenous peoples network.

34. The support of OHCHR should be sought to establish and develop a network of indigenous media on the Internet.

35. An informal indigenous features service should be established to provide the mainstream press with articles written by indigenous journalists seeking outlets in the mainstream press.

D. Cultural issues

36. Within the concept of the right to an ethnic language, greater and more professional use should be made of communication media and new technologies to preserve oral traditions, languages written in non-Latin scripts and various forms of indigenous cultural manifestations.

37. Programmes, conferences and activities of the specialized agencies concerning indigenous peoples should seek to involve journalists and media practitioners from indigenous organizations and associations.

38. Implementation should be encouraged of the relevant provisions of existing international instruments relating to media, information and communications.

E. Funding

39. In the framework of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, funds should be requested from the United Nations, Governments, non-governmental organizations and other institutions to assist with the implementation of the foregoing programme.

40. The United Nations and the specialized agencies should be asked to consider including in all projects a budget line covering the costs of communications, information and documentation

F. Meetings and follow-up

41. OHCHR should be requested to organize a second workshop of indigenous media workers, in cooperation with indigenous journalists, to further explore the issues raised in Madrid and to finalize and adopt a programme of activities for strengthening the indigenous media in the framework of the International Decade.

42. OHCHR should be requested to encourage indigenous peoples to hold regional workshops.

43. OHCHR should be requested to organize a lunchtime briefing on the results of the Workshop during the 1998 session of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations.

44. OHCHR should be requested to transmit the report of the proceedings of the Workshop to the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, DPI, UNESCO, ILO and other relevant United Nations organizations.

45. It is proposed that the Working Group on Indigenous Populations consider the theme of media information and communications at its 1999 session.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Ms. Idoia Aldama
Directorate for Development Cooperation of the Basque government

Mr. Carlos A. Arnaldo
UNESCO, Communications Division

Mr. Diego Azqueta
President, WATU/Indigenous Action, Spain

Mr. Genaro Bautista
International Indigenous Press Agency, Mexico

Ms. Aurora Bazán
International Indigenous Press Agency, Mexico

Mr. Miguel Blazquez
Iberian-American Educational Television

Mr. Suhas Chakma
South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre and freelance journalist, India

Mr. Emil Cutknife
International Organization for Indigenous Resource Development, Canada

Ms. Verónica de Assas Gaupp Berghausen
Journalist, Spain

Mr. Zuzen de la Cueva
Responsible for Development Cooperation for the NGO Eusnet Elkartea, Spain

Mr. Artemio Dumlao
Head, Public Information Commission, Cordillera Peoples Alliance and guest commentator on Radio Bombo, the main radio station in the Cordillera region, Philippines

Mr. Clayton Gordon
Television Northern Canada

Ms. Liv Inger Somby
Saami Council, Norway

Ms. Ma. Rosa Jordán
Journalist, Esto es Argentina (This is Argentina) magazine

Mr. Denes Kiba
Organizer of and contributor to an indigenous community radio station in Suriname

Mr. Sebastián Lara
International Indigenous Peoples Information and Documentation Centre, Spain

Mr. J. Wilton Littlechild
International Organization for Indigenous Resource Development, Canada

Mr. César Lonche Castellanos
Deputy, Commisison on Indigenous Affairs, Mexico

Mr. Atencio López
Founder and member, International Indigenous Press Agency (AIPIN), Panama

Mr. Cansio Mamaní López
Founder and member of a network of indigenous radio stations based in Bolivia

Ms. Lia Markelin
Research Institute, Swedish School of Social Science, University of Helsinki, Finland

Ms. Lucienne Moreo-See
Director of a Kanak radio station in New Caledonia

Ms. Nashrú López Rascón
International Indigenous Press Agency, Mexico

Ms. María Noguerol
Spanish International Cooperation Agency

Mr. Magne Ove Varsi
Research Fellow, The Saami College, Guovdageaidnu, Norway

Ms. Agnes Patak
Indigenous journalist, International Indian Treaty Council, United States of America

Mr. Antonio Pérez
Director for Anthropology, Institute for the Americas, Spain

Mr. Christian Ramos Veloz
ILO

Ms. Henrietta Rasmussen
ILO

Ms. Tida Ravn
Inuit Circumpolar Conference and Home Rule Government, Foreign Affairs, Greenland

Ms. Tarcila Rivera Zea
President of the Peruvian indigenous cultural centre Chirapaq, magazine editor and President of the Permanent Workshop of Indigenous Women of the Andean and Amazon Regions

Ms. Silvia Rodríguez Curti
Spanish journalist and host of the radio programme "Amerindia"

Mr. Gregorio Rosario
Iberian-American Educational Television

Ms. Tupaarnaq Rosing Olsen
Association of Journalists in Greenland and representative of the Greenland Home Rule Government, Information Service, Greenland

Mr. Yuri Rytheu
Chukchi freelance writer on indigenous issues and founder of the UNESCO Arctic project, Russian Federation

Mr. John T. Solbakk
Research Fellow, The Saami Institute, Faculty of Humanities, University of Tromso, Norway

Ms. Susana Valcarce
WATU/Indigenous Action

Mr. Pascual Yaxon Saloj
General Coordinator of the Mayan newspaper Rutzijol, Guatemala

Mr. Efraiín Zúñiga Galeana
Deputy, Commission on Indigenous Affairs, Mexico

Annex II

PROGRAMME

Monday, 26 January 1998

Morning	Welcome on behalf of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Government of Spain.
	Election of officers.
	Introduction of participants.
	Organization of work.
	Adoption of the agenda.
	General discussion of issues.
Afternoon	Theme: Getting indigenous issues covered in the mainstream press Presentation by Mr. Suhas Chakma.
	Discussion of issues raised Facilitator: Mr. Suhas Chakma.

Tuesday, 27 January 1998

Morning	Theme: Building and strengthening the indigenous media Presentation by Ms. Tupaarnaq Rosing Olsen, Henrietta Rasmussen, Tida Ravn and Liv Inger Somby.
	Discussion of issues raised.
Afternoon	Theme: The indigenous media as an intermediary between the United Nations and the Community Presentation by Mr. Atencio López.
	Discussion of issues raised Facilitator: Mr. Atencio López.

Wednesday, 28 January 1998

Morning	Theme: Building parternships in the Decade: suggestions for developing an indigenous journalists network. Discussion.
Afternoon	Discussion and approval of suggestions for a programme of action to strengthen indigenous journalism during the Decade. Discussion and suggestions for follow-up to the Workshop. Other conclusions and recommendations.
Evening	"The rights of indigenous peoples and the role of the press" Panel discussion with indigenous and Spanish journalists followed by a debate.